CYNGOR CEFN GWLAD CYMRU COUNTRYSIDE COUNCIL FOR WALES

SITE OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST: CITATION

POWYS COED BLAEN-Y-CWM (BLAEN-Y-CWM WOOD)

Date of Notification: 1986

National Grid Reference: SO 208370

O.S. Maps: 1:50,000 Sheet number: 161

1:25,000 Sheet number: SO 23

Site Area: 12 ha

Description:

The site comprises a semi-natural woodland dominated in pat by mixtures of ash, wych elm, sessile oak and field maple. This combination of canopy species is nationally rare, with the majority of examples occurring on the Old Red Sandstone of the Welsh Marches. The wood appears to have had a somewhat chequered history with at least one small area converted to pasture and other parts suffering clear felling and/or the introduction of conifers in the past. However, the disturbance has not apparently been great enough to impoverish the site, with known sensitive species such as lichens still well represented (41 epiphytic species) and included amongst them a few species such as *Thelotrema lepadinum*, known to be poor colonizers of cleared sites. The age range of trees is also considerable, with a number of old oaks present and also areas of dense young sapling growth. To date 133 species of higher plants and 70 species of mosses and liverworts have been recorded from the site.

The wood has developed on moist, somewhat calcareous soils on a steep south-west facing bank. Springs occur along the lower slopes, producing wet flushed areas, whilst rock outcrops are confined to the upper slopes and banks beside the stream and in the stream itself. Being ungrazed, the moister slopes bear a notably rich ground flora, including early-purple orchid *Orchis mascula*, herb-Paris *Paris quadrifolia*, giant bellflower *Campanula latifolia*, primrose *Primula vulgaris* and meadow saffron *Colchichum autumnale* amongst the more common woodland herbs such as yellow archangel *Galeobdolon luteum*, dog's mercury *Mercurialis perennis*, wood-sorrel *Oxalis acetosella* and enchanter's-nightshade *Circaea lutetiana*. The upper slopes are more acidic, supporting species such as wood sage *Teucrium scorodonia* and common cow-wheat *Melampyrum pratense*.

Lime-rich rock outcrops support a number of calcicolous plant species such as hairy St John's-wort *Hypericum hirsutum* and the mosses *Anomodon viticulosus* and *Neckera crispa*. The warm sunny glades close to the stream where these species occur are particularly attractive for butterflies, with such species as silver-washed fritillary *Argynnis paphia*, hedge brown *Pyronia tithonus* and speckled wood *Pararge aegeria* noted in some abundance in 1984. The

wood supports a notable variety of breeding birds, including wood warbler, blackcap, tawny owl and pied flycatcher. Dippers are found on the stream.

Remarks:

The site lies within Brecon Beacons National Park.

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